

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----128911 211632Z /53

P 211443Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3620

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 STOCKHOLM 01590

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, IN, SW
SUBJECT: SALE OF VIGGEN AIRCRAFT TO INDIA

1. MY COLLEAGUES AND I HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO A GREAT MANY SWEDISH ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO SWEDEN OF THE SALE OF THE VIGGEN AIRCRAFT TO INDIA, AND WE HAVE BEEN GIVING A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT TO THIS QUESTION. PREVIOUS CABLES FROM THIS EMBASSY (PARTICULARLY STOCKHOLM 1156) AND OTHERS HAVE GONE INTO THE ARGUMENTS PRO AND CON, AND I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION EXTENSIVELY DURING MY CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON IN MARCH. SINCE A USG DECISION MAY BE FORTH-COMING IN THE FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE, WITHOUT REHEARSING ALL THE ARGUMENTS AGAIN -- THEY ARE WELL KNOWN ON ALL SIDES BY NOW -- I WISH IN THIS MESSAGE TO COME DOWN SQUARELY FOR A POSITIVE US ANSWER TO SWEDEN.

2. A WORD ON TIMING. ALTHOUGH WE RAISED THE POSSIBILITY EARLIER (STOCKHOLM 1440) OF POSTPONING A USG ANSWER IN THE HOPE THAT A DECISION FOR ANOTHER AIRCRAFT WOULD BE MADE IN THE MEANWHILE, THUS OBVIATING A NEGATIVE REPLY, PRIME MINISTER FALLDIN IN HIS DEMARCHE TO ME OF APRIL 18 (STOCKHOLM 1534) SEEMED TO RULE OUT THIS COURSE OF ACTION. IF THE

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INDIANS INDEED ARE DEMANDING A USG ANSWER TO SWEDEN BEFORE THEY WILL SAY YES TO THE VIGGEN, THE USG IS APPARENTLY TRAPPED INTO HAVING TO GIVE AN ANSWER BEFORE THE MATTER IS RESOLVED. INDIAN SIGNALS ON THE TIME OF DECISION ARE APPARENTLY CHANGING, HOWEVER, SO THAT IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO LEAVE THE MATTER OPEN AWHILE, EVEN CONCEIVABLY UNTIL THE INDIAN PRIME

MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE US WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS SCHEDULED FOR JUNE. IF THIS DELAY WERE FEASIBLE, IT WOULD GIVE US A CHANCE TO RAISE THE ISSUE DIRECTLY WITH THE INDIANS IF WE SO DECIDED, AND THE INDIAN ATTITUDE ON THE DPSA IN GENERAL AND THE VIGGEN IN PARTICULAR MIGHT MAKE OUR ANSWER TO THE SWEDES EASIER TO ARRIVE AT. THE SWEDES HERE STILL SEEM TO BELIEVE AN URGENT ANSWER IS REQUIRED, ALTHOUGH WE ARE TELLING THEM THAT OUR INFORMATION INDICATES AN INDIAN DECISION MAY BE SOME TIME OFF YET. THUS THE QUESTION OF TIMING OF A USG DECISION, WHICH IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, MAY NEED TO BE DISCUSSED FURTHER WITH THE SWEDES EITHER IN WASHINGTON OR HERE.

3. ANOTHER IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY QUESTION IS WHETHER US LAW REQUIRES SPECIFICALLY THAT A POSITIVE REPLY ON THE VIGGEN WOULD NECESSARILY PRESUPPOSE A US WILLINGNESS TO SELL A SIMILAR US AIRCRAFT TO INDIA. PM DIRECTOR GELB HAS REFERRED TO SUCH A PROVISION, BUT WE AT THE EMBASSY ARE FRANKLY NOT INFORMED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT SUCH A PROVISION OF US LAW AND HOW IRONCLAD IT IS. I SHOULD APPRECIATE FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS POINT, IF POSSIBLE, SINCE IT SEEMS CRUCIAL TO OUR ARGUMENT AGAINST APPROVING VIGGEN SALES. ALTHOUGH IGNORANT OF THE SPECIFICS, I AM ASSUMING THAT IF THE USG WANTED BADLY ENOUGH TO APPROVE THE VIGGEN EXPORT, WE COULD
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FIND A WAY WITHIN US REGULATIONS TO DO SO. PLEASE CORRECT ME IF I AM WRONG.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 STOCKHOLM 1590

EXDIS

4. NOW TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT WHEN WE TOLD THE SWEDES (SAAB) IN 1976 THAT WE COULD NOT APPROVE VIGGEN SALES TO INDIA, WE GAVE AS OUR ONLY REASON THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF TECHNOLOGY TO THE RUSSIANS. MEANWHILE CHANGES IN INDIA SEEM TO HAVE LESSENED THAT DANGER (WE HAVE NOT HEARD IT MENTIONED THIS TIME), AND NOW WE ARE BASING OUR ANSWER PURELY ON GROUNDS OF RESTRAINING THE ARMS RACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT. OPPOSED TO THAT OBVIOUSLY DESIRABLE END IS THE ALSO VERY DESIRABLE END OF MAINTAINING THE SWEDISH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY AS A VITAL PART OF SWEDISH DEFENSE, WHICH THE USG BELIEVES IS ESSENTIAL TO THE STATUS QUO ON THE NORTHERN FLANK. (THE EXCELLENT INR IN-HOUSE PAPER OF APRIL 20 MAKES VERY CLEAR THE EXTREMELY HARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF A NEGATIVE USG DECISION.) WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE FROM STOCKHOLM, I AM INCREASINGLY CONVINCED FROM READING THE TRAFFIC THAT THE INDIANS ARE DETERMINED TO ACQUIRE A DPSA, AND THAT A USG TURNDOWN OF THE VIGGEN WOULD SIMPLY TRANSFER THE SALE EITHER TO THE JAGUAR OR MIRAGE OR, WORSE OF ALL, TO THE RUSSIANS. OUR ARGUMENT TO THE SWEDES REDUCES ITSELF TO THIS: SINCE THE US IS NOT PREPARED TO SELL A DPSA TO INDIA, WE ARE NOT WILLING TO LET THE SWEDES DO SO, EVEN IF THIS SIMPLY MEANS THE BRITISH OR FRENCH OR
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RUSSIANS WILL DO SO INSTEAD. AS LONG AS THERE IS A GENUINE CHANCE OF PREVENTING INDIAN ACQUISITION OF A DPSA, THIS STAND MAKES SOME SENSE. BUT ONCE IT BECOMES ENTIRELY CLEAR THAT THE INDIANS WILL BUY A DPSA SOMEWHERE, THEN THE USG POSITION BECOMES, I FEAR, QUIXOTIC. WE ARE ASKED TO WEIGH A PRINCIPLE OF ARMS CONTROL AGAINST A VERY REAL LOSS TO WESTERN INTERESTS IN EUROPE IF SWEDEN IS TURNED DOWN.

5. AT THE RISK OF SEEMING TO BE MERELY AN ADVOCATE OF LOCAL INTERESTS, I WISH TO ARGUE THAT THE US INTEREST IS IN APPROVING THE VIGGEN SALE. I AM AS ATTACHED AS ANYONE TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S EXCELLENT POSITION ON ARMS CONTROL, BUT I HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT A POSITIVE DECISION ON THE VIGGEN COULD BE DEFENDED BEFORE CONGRESS OR PUBLIC OPINION OR IN ANY ARMS CONTROL FORUM AS A NON-ESCALATORY MEASURE,

GIVEN THE FACTS OF THE SITUATION. GIVEN THE REAL LOSS
IN A US NO, VERSUS THE LOSS IN PRINCIPLE IN A US YES,
I DEFINITELY BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD SAY YES TO
SWEDEN IN THIS VITAL QUESTION.
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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